DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 450 364 CS 014 315

AUTHOR	Blanck, Phyllis; Perepeluk, Stephen
TITLE	Developing School-University Partnerships: Reading Recovery and Project Read in New York City.
INSTITUTION	Reading Recovery Council of North America, Columbus, OH.
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	5p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Reading Recovery Council of North America, Inc., Suite 100, 1929 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1069. Tel: 614-292-7111; Web site: http://www.readingrecovery.org.
PUB TYPE	Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT	Network News; p16-18 Fall 1998
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*College School Cooperation; Early Intervention; *Emergent Literacy; Higher Education; *Partnerships in Education; Politics of Education; Primary Education; Program Descriptions
IDENTIFIERS	New York (New York); *Project READ; *Reading Recovery Projects

ABSTRACT

This article describes a partnership between the Reading Recovery Project at New York University and Project Read, a literacy program of the Board of Education in New York City. The first section details how Reading Recovery and Project Read became working partners. The second section discuses the crucial importance of administrative support, notes increasing numbers of trained Reading Recovery teachers within school districts, and points out positive results. The third section discusses ongoing challenges. It notes teacher leaders' responsibilities as they implement Reading Recovery in all its complexity, and states that pulling teacher leaders away from their primary roles of implementing Reading Recovery will eventually have a serious detrimental impact on the program. (SR)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 450 364

Developing School-University Partnerships: Reading Recovery and Project Read In New York City.

by Phyllis Blanck and Stephen Perepeluk

CS 014 315

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. F. Bussell

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Developing School-University Partnerships:

Reading Recovery and Project Read in New York City

PHYLLIS BLANCK, PROJECT MANAGER, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY READING RECOVERY PROJECT
STEPHEN PEREPELUK, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF LITERACY, BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

In recent years, early literacy achievement has become a political issue and policy makers from the President to the Mayor of New York City have taken early literacy achievement on as a cause. The spotlight has focused on educators working with young children, particularly those charged with the teaching of reading. New York City has been no exception. With the recent attention of the mayor, the chancellor, and the media, teachers and principals are being pushed harder than ever to improve achievement scores in reading as a critical measure of success. While questions persist about the viability of testing at such early grades, no one disputes that the pressure is on. Since Reading Recovery plays an important role in a comprehensive early literacy plan, partnerships need to be formed in order to achieve its two outcomes for the lowest achieving, first grade children: 1) significantly reduce the numbers of these children needing further service beyond first grade and 2) identify the small percentage of first graders who need further assessment and some type of longer term service. Reading Recovery has shown us that in combination with good classroom teaching it is possible to have all but a very small percentage of children reading and writing by the end of first grade.

As Project Read has developed and refined its identity, Reading Recovery and Project Read have become working partners.

In the highly political climate of an election year, Rudolph Giuliana, Mayor of New York, in collaboration with the Board of Education, initially funded Project Read for $125 million dollars which was to be administered through the Office of Literacy at the Board with a Director and a team of facilitators. The project has three components from which districts may select: 1) the after school program, which is the largest effort, seeks to provide up to six hours per week of literacy activities for the neediest children (based on school-wide scores); 2) the intensive school-day program which offers a school district four options for implementing a literacy initiative in the district, including Reading Recovery, Success for All, the Literacy Enhancement Program or a district could design their own program, and 3) family literacy programs which provide funds to school districts seeking to implement family literacy services. Project Read coordinates each of these three program components by offering training for school and district personnel, conducting large scale city-wide events for teachers and educators, conducting site visits and coordinating professional development, and organizing information sessions. Project Read has also been instrumental in the development of a new early literacy assessment tool in collaboration with McGraw Hill for these programs, called ECLAS (Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System) which has been piloted in the spring of 1998 and will be administered individually to all K-2 students twice yearly beginning this fall.

When Project Read was formally announced in May, 1997, the Reading Recovery Project at New York University was invited to present to school district teams who were charged with 'setting up' their district Project Read programs. New York University Reading Recovery Project Director Jane Ashdown and M. Trika Smith-Burke, Director of Site Development, prepared a brief presentation and provided a short printed description of Reading Recovery to be distributed at the planning meeting, knowing full well that interested districts would need a much better understanding to complete the Project Read application packet integrating Reading Recovery into a comprehensive school plan which would meet Project Read goals. Although several New York City districts had been implementing Reading Recovery previously, there were many administrators for whom Reading Recovery was new, or at best vaguely familiar. Several superintendents had been working for several years to implement the program in their districts and this was just the financial jump start they needed to get started. The NYU Reading Recovery Project then held an additional session at the university training center one week after the initial Board of Education meeting which focused on the preparation of the districts' proposals as well as to develop further district understanding of the significant commitment that Reading Recovery requires.

A Working Partnership is Created.

As Project Read has developed and refined its identity, Reading Recovery and Project Read have become working partners. This partnership has created a context for building better understanding of the role of Reading Recovery in a comprehensive plan. For example, as Director of the NYU Reading Recovery Project, Jane Ashdown was able to explain the benefits of training a teacher leader to build future training capacity to the Director of Instruction at the Board of Education so that one of the Project Read requirements of working with 60 students could be waived for a new district just starting the implementation of Reading Recovery. In other districts Project Read funds underwrote teacher salaries who trained and work part-time in Reading Recovery and spend their afternoons pushing into classrooms to support good classroom teaching with on-going, flexible grouping or who work in other ways such as small group teaching in second grade to promote the Project Read goals. Schools have been asked to establish Project Read teams which always include the

continued on next page

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Developing School-University Partnerships: --

continued from previous page

Reading Recovery teacher(s) if the program has been selected as part of their early literacy plan.

Administrative Support.

Often invisible administrative support can make or break the implementation of an initiative. In creating a partnership, the participating institutions need to work closely to minimize the possible mismatch of administrative routines from the individual institutions and to facilitate efficient processing of administrative forms. For example, the New York City Board of Education represents 32 school districts and over 1 million children. NYU's School of Education has been in existence for over 100 years and is part of one of the largest private universities in the country. To do business with the Board of Education in a reasonable manner requires a contract and vendor number. Intricate approval measures are required to do business with the Board. It took collaboration and a great deal of time and detailed attention on the part of the Director of the Office of Literacy and his staff as well as the NYU training center's Director and Project Manager to insure that the Reading Recovery Project become an "approved vendor" with official contract and vendor number. Improved administrative mechanisms must be in place for these kinds of partnerships to succeed.

The most significant impact the Project Read/Reading Recovery partnership has had is in the increasing numbers of trained Reading Recovery teachers within districts which already had the program, thus moving each school close to full implementation of the program. Due to the additional funding, districts have in some cases been able to offer two teacher training classes. While teaching two classes places even more responsibility on teacher leaders, it has become even more important that they limit their role to the implementation of Reading Recovery if the program is to successfully accomplish its goals. However, the increase in the number of trained Reading Recovery teachers will enable schools to potentially do more flexible staffing, while meeting the needs of the lowest achieving first graders. Other districts have chosen to train an additional teacher leader in order to continue to expand their potential for training more teachers in the future. Clearly the number of children served has greatly increased due to this partnership.

School district administrators have also found the training of the Reading Recovery teachers to be an added resource to district schools. They have been asked to share their understanding of observational techniques, particularly the running record, as well as their knowledge of the gradient of difficulty of materials and how to select appropriate texts for children. This year during the other half of their days, Reading Recovery teachers are very likely to be involved in the training and administration of the ECLAS which is an observational, developmental assessment, based on an emergent/early reading and writing model.

Ultimately the Reading Recovery/Project Read partnership has produced results. While it is impossible to tease out the specific effects of Reading Recovery per se, children have benefited from the new initiative which includes Reading Recovery in many schools. Based on preliminary review of available system-wide assessment data, the Board of Education has reported that the scores of the Grade 3 Project Read students receiving intensive school day support (of which Reading Recovery is a part) have risen to 43.9% reading at grade level in 1998 from 40.7% in 1997. (Figures are nationally normed.) This increase is particularly noteworthy because the Project Read children were identified as the group of children most at risk for reading failure when they began receiving intensive school-day instruction.

The most significant impact the Project Read/Reading Recovery partnership has had is in the increasing numbers of trained Reading Recovery teachers within districts which already had the program, thus moving each school close to full implementation of the program.

On-going Challenges.

There is still a great deal of on-going dissemination and education about Reading Recovery to be done with district administrators, principals, classroom teachers, and Project Read staff as well as the other supervisors, professors and researchers in teacher education at the university. School district administrators who are required to have a district-wide Project Read team see the teacher leader(s) as an integral member of the district team as well as assisting Project Read School teams. While this makes sense from an administrative point of view, several problems have arisen. Meeting times often conflict with the teacher leaders' time to teach their children, make school visits, problem solve with teachers about difficult children and work with training classes or continuing contact time. Pulling the teacher leader away from her primary role of implementing Reading Recovery *in all its complexity* will eventually have a serious detrimental impact on the program. Teacher leaders' responsibilities include:

- daily teaching of the hardest to teach first graders to refine their own continuing understanding about how to teach these children,
- consulting with trained Reading Recovery teachers to problem-solve and facilitate teaching of children who are encountering difficulties,

continued on next page

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Developing School-University Partnerships: --

continued from previous page

- teaching the class for new teachers with required school visits,
- conducting continuing contact sessions and at least one school visit for trained teachers to ensure that all teachers' teaching is continuing to improve,
- assisting school teams in understanding of Reading Recovery's standards and guidelines to ensure effective implementation, in developing a monitoring system for Reading Recovery students, and helping them tailor the implementation to meet the needs of their lowest achieving first graders,
- collaborating with district administrators and/or staff developers about comprehensive literacy planning,
- conducting information sessions for parents, administrators, and classroom teachers to help them better understand the program,
- consistently monitoring student achievement and determining whether Reading Recovery teachers need support to further refine their teaching,
- keeping current with research on literacy learning and teaching, staff development, as well as on Reading Recovery including on-going research of Reading Recovery procedures, data collection and implementation issues,
- writing and presenting reports and case studies about the successful results of the program and the on-going challenges.

Similar challenges are faced by Reading Recovery teachers in schools when they are pulled to attend meetings, cover classes, administer annual tests, or do lunch or bus duty which often causes "missed instructional time" for the Reading Recovery children who need consistent, daily teaching in order to make accelerated progress and successfully discontinue.

Pulling the teacher leader away from her primary role of implementing Reading Recovery in all its complexity will eventually have a serious detrimental impact on the program.

Communication has helped to alleviate some of these kinds of difficulty within the Reading Recovery/Project Read Partnership but needs to be continued to help others understand the complexity of the program. For example, inviting groups of principals or university professors to observe a Reading Recovery lesson behind the glass and discuss it is a powerful tool. Principals can work to free first grade teachers to observe children from their classes in a Reading Recovery lesson, and scheduling times when primary classroom teachers and Reading Recovery teachers can communicate, coordinate, and plan together is critical. At the university departmental chairs can create a context which rewards teaching and integrative planning across courses with input from field-based projects. Scheduling meetings after the public school day can also facilitate participation within and across venues and groups. The key to successful dissemination is "show: don't just tell!" and it is clear that on-going collaboration needs to be refined.

The collaboration between the NYU Reading Recovery Project and the Board of Education has brought large numbers of players together towards one goal: eliminating reading failure in the public schools of New York City. As the assessment phase begins, and as services expand into a second year, we hope that what has begun as a strong relationship between the Board of Education and New York University will continue to evolve and become an example of how school-university partnerships would work.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE